

**Anne Stone, Murder Victims' Family Member, speaking in support of SB 280**

I offer testimony as one of 179 murder victims' family members in Connecticut who are concerned about the death penalty and speaking out for repeal. Last year there were 76 of us and because of the many reasons the death penalty has harmed us, our numbers have more than doubled.

Our son, Ralph, was brutally stabbed to death during a robbery in his condominium in Washington, D.C.

We learned of his murder shortly before midnight in July of 1997, and by morning we were on a flight to D.C. The police response was horrifyingly inadequate as we were directed to the wrong police station, and when we found our way to the correct police station, there was no one available to talk with us. Not until late in the evening did a detective come to where we were staying to give us details of the murder.

In the end, Ralph's murder was never solved, and was labeled a "cold case" – one of those cases all but forgotten by society. But for us, the case will always be remembered and it is very difficult not having more information about what happened to our son, or some legal finality and accountability.

Right now in Connecticut it is estimated that there are nearly 900 cold cases that could be investigated because there is a living witness or suspect. But there are only 16-20 cases being actively investigated by the Prosecutors cold case unit and they've said that they aren't going to take any more cases. The state's Chief Prosecutor has said there simply aren't the resources to fully investigate all the cases. A year ago the cold case unit had 22 inspectors, and now only has 13, with budget shortfalls threatening even fewer personnel will be able to work on the many cold cases in Connecticut.

It breaks my heart to know there are so many families like ours living with uncertainty and wishing that someone in authority would care enough to pay attention to our cases. Not to mention how alarming it is that there are maybe 900 murderers loose on the streets.

Then I think about the death penalty. The notion of the death penalty never brought my family any solace. In fact, we were relieved to learn that Washington D.C doesn't even have the death penalty, because we knew what a roller coaster ride the process would be for our family. But we spend millions of dollars every year to keep the death penalty, while 900 families like mine are left without answers.

This doesn't make any sense to me at all. Of course hard decisions have to be made when resources are finite. But to spend millions on a death penalty system that affects a handful of cases, while hundreds of families are desperate for answers seems like the wrong choice for Connecticut victims.

I hope the legislature will take the important step of repealing the death penalty so we stop squandering resources that could be put to much better use.